

- I. Two **main purposes** of elections
- A. **Build regime support** in *both*
1. Autocracies with non-competitive elections
  2. Democracies with competitive elections: *political efficacy* is higher Table 10.1
    - a. In voters than non-voters and
    - b. In both voters & non-voters *after* an election compared to *before* that same election
- B. **Select leaders & policies** (the latter through *referenda* or *referendums*)
- II. **Electoral systems**
- A. **Single-member-district** (*plurality, winner-take-all*)
1. *Basic principle*: each legislative district elects one representative by *plurality vote*
  2. *Usage*: found mainly in Britain & its former colonies
  3. *Advantage*: usually guarantees that one party will win a governing majority in the legislature
  4. *Disadvantages*:
    - a. Reduces the number of competitive parties to only two (unless the parties are concentrated regionally, like Canada, which has 4 major parties, each strong in a different part of the country)
    - b. Gives no local representation in any district to those who do not support the winning party's candidate in that district
- B. **Multi-member-district** (*proportional representation* or PR)
1. *Basic principle*: each legislative district elects more than one representative with the winners chosen in proportion to the votes they receive
  2. *Two major variations* (there are many others)
    - a. **Party-list voting**
      - (1) *Definition*: parties make lists of candidates to be elected; legislative seats get allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes the party receives
        - (a) *Closed list*: parties determine the order in which that party's candidates are elected
        - (b) *Open list*: voters have at least some influence on the order in which a party's candidates are elected
      - (2) *Usage*: most democracies & the European Parliament
    - b. **Single-transferable vote** (also called **preference voting**)
      - (1) *Definition*: each voter ranks candidates rather than chooses a party list
      - (2) *Usage*: Republic of Ireland, Ulster, Malta
  3. *Advantages* of any PR system:
    - a. Gives much broader representation of diverse interests in society
    - b. Encourages higher voting turnout
  4. *Disadvantages* of any PR system:
    - a. Usually results in a multi-party system with no one party enjoying majority control
    - b. The more legislators elected from each district, the more numerous parties there will be, and the less stable the governing multi-party coalition will be
- C. **Mixed system**: a combination of *single-member elections* with *additional-member adjustments* for *proportional representation*
1. *Typical procedure*:
    - a. Voters vote once for a single district representative (winner-take-all), and a second time for a party
    - b. The party balance in the legislature is adjusted proportional to the distribution of second or party votes
  2. *Usage*: found in Germany, Mexico, and New Zealand
- III. **Referenda** (*referendums* or *plebiscites*)
- A. *Definition*: elections in which voters choose whether a proposal is accepted or rejected
1. The proposal may be the adoption of a new constitution, a constitutional amendment, a law, the recall of an elected official or simply a specific government policy.
  2. In the U.S. the term **referendum** is often reserved for a direct popular vote initiated by a legislature while a vote originating in a petition of citizens is referred to as an **initiative**, **ballot measure** or **proposition**.
- B. **National referenda**
1. *Usage* is not widespread
    - a. *Not used* at the national level in the U.S. – but is used in 24 American states (mainly in the west)
    - b. *Used only once* in the U.K. (in 1975 on continued membership of the European Economic Community)
    - c. *Used infrequently* in about 2 dozen democracies (including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, European Union, France, Iraq, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela)
    - d. *Used most frequently* in France & Switzerland (but, still infrequently)
  2. *Advantage*: purest form of popular sovereignty – check on government

3. *Disadvantages*
  - a. Proposals usually cannot get the detailed and careful consideration by the electorate that they can receive in a legislature
  - b. An intense minority can defeat an apathetic majority because of relatively low turnout in many referenda

#### IV. **Electoral participation** (*turnout*)

##### A. Competing *definitions*:

1. (Number of voters) divided by (number of registered voters)
2. (Number of voters) divided by (number of eligible voters)
3. (Number of voters) divided by (number of voting-age adults) – *best definition for comparison purposes*

##### B. *Factors that influence turnout*

###### 1. **System-level factors**

- a. Convenience of Election Day(s)
- b. Registration burdens
- c. Difficulty of choices
  - (1) Frequency of elections & number of offices on the ballot
    - (a) Federal v. unitary
    - (b) Presidential v. parliamentary
  - (2) Type of party system (two-party v. multi-party)

###### 2. **Individual-level factors**

- a. *Socio-demographic* Table 10.2
  - (1) Strong predictors in the U.S.: class, age, social connectedness
  - (2) Weak predictors in the U.S.: race, region, or gender
- b. *Psychological*
  - (1) Strong predictors
    - (a) Strength of party identification
    - (b) Level of interest in current campaign
    - (c) Strength of external political efficacy (opposite = anomie)
  - (2) Weak predictor: strength of political trust (opposite = cynicism)

###### 3. **Legal barriers to voting in the U.S.**

- a. *Former restrictions, no longer imposed*
  - (1) Religion
  - (2) Class
  - (3) Race
  - (4) Election of U.S. Senators (17th amendment, 1913)
  - (5) Gender (19th amendment, 1920)
  - (6) D.C. residency (23rd amendment, 1961)
  - (7) Age: 18-20-year-olds were formerly disenfranchised in many states (26th amendment, 1971, set minimum voting age at 18 nationwide)
- b. *Restrictions currently imposed by some or all states*
  - (1) Citizenship
  - (2) Residence
  - (3) Registration
  - (4) Felony conviction
  - (5) Mental health

###### 4. *The paradox of participation*: individual v. collective motivation

- a. Factors *encouraging* increased turnout in the U.S.
  - (1) Rise of education levels
  - (2) Expanded legal access
  - (3) Decline of traditional gender roles
- b. Factors *discouraging* turnout in the U.S.
  - (1) Decline in external efficacy
  - (2) Decline in strength of partisanship
  - (3) Decline in social connectedness

#### V. **The bases of individuals' electoral choices**

##### A. **Short-term factors**

1. *Issues*
  - a. State of the economy (income, unemployment, inflation)
  - b. National security
2. *Candidates* (trustworthiness & competence)

##### B. **Long-term factors**

1. Individuals' *party identification*
2. *Other group identifications* (region, class, race/ethnicity, religion, gender, age) Table 10.3